

Brazil Today

The Independence of Brazil

The events leading to Brazil's independence started in Europe. Emperor Napoleon of France invaded Portugal and Spain in 1807 and 1808. The Portuguese rulers fled from Lisbon, Portugal, to Brazil. Brazil was a Portuguese colony in the New World. The Spanish **monarch**¹ was captured and temporarily imprisoned.

All of Spain's colonies in the New World were on their own. Though the colonies officially belonged to Spain, they did not want the king always looking over their shoulders and managing their affairs. The colonists wanted much more freedom from Spain. They began to see the imprisonment of their monarch as a chance to gain independence. Latin Americans started to rise up against the lingering signs of Spanish power. Spain was determined to hold on to its New World colonies. The two sides fought many bloody battles in Central and South America. Spain's **colonies**² fought a long, hard war for independence.

In Brazil, it was different. The colony became independent more peacefully. Prince John VI, the future Portuguese monarch, escaped Napoleon and moved to Brazil. The colony became the seat of the grand Portuguese Empire that covered parts of Africa, India, and Brazil. The future king of Portugal stayed in Brazil for 13 years. He grew attached to Brazilians and the colony. Brazilians did not feel removed from the Portuguese government. Instead, they felt that the prince brought **status**³ and glory to their colony. Indeed, in 1815, John VI announced that Brazil would be a kingdom, on equal footing in the Portuguese Empire with the kingdom of Portugal itself.

¹ **monarch:** either a king or queen

² **colony:** a distant territory belonging to or under the control of another nation

³ **status:** position or rank in relation to others

John VI became king of Brazil, but he had to agree to rule from Portugal. John VI's form of government was a *constitutional monarchy*. The constitution protected the rights of the people, just as the U.S. Constitution protects U.S. citizens. But unlike the U.S., Brazil still had a monarch. When John VI sailed for Portugal, his 23-year-old son, Pedro, remained in Brazil.

In the meantime, the rest of Latin America was fighting bloody wars for independence. The territory once held by Spain split into many different groups. These groups fought each other. The map of South America used to be two big territories. It was divided between the colonies of Spain and the one colony of Portugal, Brazil. Today the many different countries on the South American map remind us of the divisions within Latin America. All of the different boundaries were established through wars for independence, except for the case of Brazil. Brazil stayed **intact**⁴ as one country, just as it had been one territory.

Pedro realized that Brazil's people wanted independence, although they were not yet revolting. But, the government in Portugal was worried that Pedro favored the Brazilians too much. Pedro's father ordered him to come back to Portugal. Instead, he disobeyed his father and remained in Brazil. He is supposed to have simply declared, "I remain!" After his decision to stay, Pedro announced that Brazil would be independent from Portugal. Today, Brazilians celebrate this moment in history with "I Remain Day," similar to our Fourth of July. Pedro's stance let Brazil gain freedom without fighting.

⁴ **intact:** whole; not changed or broken up

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The Portuguese monarch fled to Brazil because
 - a. he wanted to begin a new empire.
 - b. Napoleon invaded Portugal.
 - c. his father ordered him to.
 - d. he wanted to discover the New World.

2. Why does the author describe Spanish colonies in Central and South America?
 - a. to explain why Brazilians got the idea to battle for independence
 - b. to illustrate how Brazil had a more violent fight for independence than other places did
 - c. to show that Brazil had to become independent or else join the Spanish Empire
 - d. to contrast their battles for independence with Brazil's independence

3. Based on the passage, which of these statements best explains why Pedro favored Brazilian independence?
 - a. He had lived in Brazil for most of his life.
 - b. He had heard that Spain's colonies were fighting bloody wars.
 - c. The people were not yet revolting.
 - d. His father had already returned to Portugal to be king.

4. Read the following sentences: "Pedro's father ordered him to come back to Portugal. Instead, he disobeyed his father and remained in Brazil."

The word **disobeyed** means

- a. did not do as he was told
- b. learned a lesson from
- c. honored or cherished
- d. took him off the throne

5. This passage is mostly about

- a. why John VI decided to leave Brazil and return to Portugal.
- b. how Brazil achieved independence more peacefully than many other colonies.
- c. why John VI and his son Pedro did not get along and could not both be rulers together.
- d. how Brazil began as a Portuguese colony in a land that used to be a Spanish colony.

6. What event does “I Remain Day” celebrate in Brazil, and why is it important?

7. Explain how Napoleon’s invasions of Spain and Portugal helped lead to independence for Spanish colonies and the Portuguese colony of Brazil.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

King John VI’s son Pedro decided to stay in Brazil; _____, Brazil would become completely independent.

- a. previously
- b. in contrast
- c. particularly
- d. as a result

9. Read the following sentence.

Napoleon's invasion of Portugal helped lead to independence in Brazil.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. What? Napoleon's invasion of Portugal
2. What did Napoleon's invasion of Portugal do? _____
3. Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary word:** colony: distant territory belonging to or under the control of another nation.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
